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ABSTRACT

A survey was made of student teachers in the Secondary Education Program at Western Kentucky University to determine their attitudes regarding their student teaching experience. Responses to a 25 item questionnaire were obtained from 123 students. The findings showed that: (1) Most student teachers were highly positive in their rating of the student teaching experience, although higher academic-achieving students gave it less favorable scores; (2) A high correlation existed between a student's previous grade point average and the student teaching grade; and (3) The student teaching grade did not relate significantly to the rating given to the student teaching experience. Student teachers were most enthusiastic about the students they taught, the locale of the school, and their relationship with the faculty; they were most concerned about the mismatch of temperaments and philosophy between themselves and the cooperating teachers, unclear cooperating teacher expectations, difficulty in teaching students of varying abilities, and the lack of appropriate teaching materials and equipment. The results of this study are compared to those from a similar study done at Eastern Kentucky University. Data obtained from the study are presented in tables and the survey questionnaire is appended. (DG)

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STUDENT TEACHER ATTITUDES REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCES IN STUDENT TEACHING: A SURVEY

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STUDENT TEACHER ATTITUDES REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCES IN STUDENT TEACHING: A SURVEY

Introduction

The significance of student teaching as a valuable part of teachers' preparation is seldom challenged. Even Teacher Education's harshest critics who disparage so-called "methods courses" will usually grant the practicality of student teaching for those preparing to be teachers. Yet, despite the broad based sentiment favoring the requirement of student teaching and the considerable time and resources devoted to its implementation, many teacher preparation institutions fail to study adequately the quality of the program as the student teacher experiences it. Perhaps it would be informative and helpful for such institutions to obtain "feedback" from those who are most directly involved in the student teaching process and thus have much to relate--the student teachers themselves.

The findings from such "feedback" should be of interest to those who make student teacher assignments, to college faculty who supervise student teachers, to high school teachers cooperating in the student teaching process, and to college students who have just finished their student teaching or will do so in the near future.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the attitudes of student teachers in the Secondary Teacher Education Program at Western Kentucky University regarding various aspects of their student teaching experience. A comparison of the study's findings was to be made with those of a similar study conducted at Eastern Kentucky University.[1]

More specifically, the study proposed to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the statistical indices of the survey data which describe the salient features of the student teacher experience?
2. Will students' overall grade point average (GPA) earned prior to student teaching relate significantly to how they rate their student teaching experience?
3. Will students' overall GPA earned just prior to student teaching relate significantly to the grades the students obtained at the end of their student teaching course?
4. Will students' grades earned in student teaching relate significantly to the rating they gave their student teaching experience?
5. What aspects of the student teaching experience are rated very high and which are rated very low by those surveyed?
6. How do the data obtained from WKU student teachers compare with data obtained from EKU student teachers?

Delimitations of the Study

The focus of this survey is on the experiences of student teachers in the Secondary Education Program at Western Kentucky

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[1]Betty Stoess, Student Teacher Satisfaction with Placement for Student Teaching. An unpublished monograph presented at the Fall Conference of Kentucky Association of Teacher Educators, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky, 30 September 1983.

University; therefore, only those student teachers in Secondary Education were surveyed.

Method

Since this study in part replicated a study done by Stoess at Eastern Kentucky University in 1983, the method used approximated hers. The instrument was identical to the one she used. Specifically, it contained a set of twenty-five positively stated items with a five choice Likert Scale. Each item was scored, using the following point system: Strongly Agree = 5; Agree = 4; Undecided = 3; Disagree = 2; Strongly Disagree = 1.

The Sample

A total of 144 student teachers who were enrolled in the Secondary Education Program at Western Kentucky University during the Fall Semester of 1983 and the Spring Semester of 1984 were surveyed. Of these, 123 (85.4 per cent) students responded, some after being sent a follow-up letter. Students whose surveys contained unusually high or unusually low scores were called on the telephone to verify those scores. It was found that 4 students had misinterpreted the scale and thus had given ratings opposite to what they intended. The errors were corrected and the data organized into tables for purposes of analysis and interpretation.

Statistical Procedures

The following statistical procedures were used: simple percentages, measures of central tendency (mean, mode), standard deviation, correlation (Pearson method), and the T-test of significance. The test of significance was the .05 level.

Findings

The findings of this research are presented to correspond to the specific research questions posed in the Purpose of the Study. The presentation of the data, an analysis of the data, and a brief commentary on the findings pertinent to each question follow:

Question 1: What are the statistical indices which describe the salient findings of the survey?

Answer: Of the 123 student teachers who responded to the survey, most were highly positive in their rating of their student teaching experience. The overall ratings ranged from a perfect 125 (given by five respondents) to a low of 70 (given by one). The mean overall rating was 112.51. The choice most frequently chosen on the 5-point Likert Scale was Strongly Agree (5). Only 19 of the 123 respondents failed to give an overall mean response rating of at least 4 (i.e., Agree). The ratings were negatively skewed. (See TABLE VI, APPENDIX A.) Table VII in APPENDIX A presents each item of the survey with its statistical results that provide further description of the salient findings.

Question 2: Will students' overall grade point average (GPA) earned prior to student teaching relate significantly to the rating given the student teaching experience?

Answer: The Pearson r method was used to determine the correlation between the two variables: overall GPA (earned prior to student teaching) and students' rating of their experience. A negative correlation coefficient of -.15 was obtained. This coefficient was not quite high enough to be significant at the .05 level. The fact that the coefficient was negative and almost significant serves to indicate that perhaps students who make high grades tend to be a bit less positive in rating their experience.

Question 3: Will students' overall GPA earned prior to student teaching relate significantly to the grades the students obtained at the end of the student teaching course?

Answer: As determined by the T-test, the students' overall GPA earned prior to student teaching did relate significantly as to whether the students obtained a grade of A or B in student teaching. TABLE I presents the findings.

TABLE I

STUDENT TEACHING GRADES ANALYZED BY GPA EARNED PRIOR TO STUDENT TEACHING

Student Teaching Grade	A	B	C
N	101	19	3
Mean GPA (Prior to Stud. Teach.)	2.95	2.56	2.85
S. D.	.41	.31	.51

A T-test determined that there is a difference, in mean GPA earned prior to student teaching, between groups who made a student teaching grade of A and those who made a grade of B. This difference was significant at the .05 level. Evidently those factors which influence the earning of grades in academic courses operate, to some extent, in the earning of grades in student teaching.

Question 4: Will students' grades earned in student teaching relate significantly to their rating of their student teaching experience?

Answer: There was no difference significant at the .05 level between the ratings given by students who received A and those who received B in student teaching. A T-test was used to test for the significant difference. Evidently students who received B instead of A in student teaching were not influenced to render a less positive rating of their experience. TABLE II presents the comparative data for the two groups:

TABLE II

RATINGS OF STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE BY GRADE EARNED

	Students Making Grade "A"	Students Making Grade "B"
N	101	19
Mean	4.46	4.34
S. D.	.45	1.03

Question 5: What aspects of the student teaching experience are rated very high and which very low by those surveyed?

Answer: The items which students gave their highest ratings are presented in rank order in TABLE III below. The items which students gave their lowest rating (and which might indicate program weaknesses) follow in TABLE IV.

TABLE III

ITEMS RECEIVING HIGHEST RATINGS

Item No.	Rank Order	Item Statement
23	1	I really liked the students I taught.
1	2	I felt comfortable working in the locale.
2	3	My relationship with the faculty was positive.
3	4.5	My cooperating teacher showed genuine concern.
4	4.5	I am very positive about the program.

TABLE IV

ITEMS RECEIVING LOWEST RATINGS

Item No.	Rank Order	Item Statement
5	25	My cooperative teacher and I have similar temperaments.
10	24	My teacher and I agree philosophically.
11	23	I dealt successfully with ability levels of the students.
17	22	I was always aware of my teacher's expectations for me.
14	21	Materials and equipment available were adequate.

It is interesting to note that the item which received the highest rating was number 23. This highly positive response indicates that the majority possess that characteristic which is fundamental to teaching success--liking the students. High ratings of items number 1 and 2 indicate also that these student teachers possess other qualities basic to successful teaching--adaptability to teaching locale and ability to develop good relationships with the faculty. Items number 3 and 4 reflect student teacher positive attitudes about both the cooperating teacher and the program.

The items receiving the lowest and second lowest were items 5 and 10 respectively. Perhaps it is not to be expected that cooperating teachers and student teachers will have similar temperaments or will share the same philosophy. Being confronted

with working conditions in which dissimilar views and temperaments are held can be a vital part of one's education in society. Working and succeeding in such a context may help assure future success in modern day high schools. Perhaps certain cooperating teachers could be counseled to address the concerns expressed in numbers 17, 11 and 14: making teacher expectations clear, teaching the different ability levels, and providing materials and equipment more adequate for the teaching task. It may well be that most teachers are doing these well enough now. Perhaps even more could be encouraged to do so.

Question 6: How do the data obtained from WKU student teachers compare with data obtained from EKU student teachers?

Answer: Certain data presented in the study by Stoess at EKU are compared with the data on the same variables at WKU. TABLE V below presents the comparisons.

TABLE V

A COMPARISON OF CERTAIN SELECTED SURVEY DATA: EKU AND WKU

No. of Students Responding	EKU 89	WKU 123
Total Point Ratings of Student Teaching Experience (possible 125)	Mean = 104.31	Mean = 112.51
Students Averaging at Least 4.0 (on a 5-point scale) for Each Response	72%	85%
Students Averaging at Least 3.5 (on a 5-point scale) for Each Response	88%	93%

The data presented in TABLE V show a statistical edge in favor of Western survey data on the measures considered. These data should be interpreted cautiously, and any claim for

superiority of Western's Program to Eastern's cannot be justified. Perhaps one reason for the higher ratings at Western was that the investigators verified all extreme scores. This verification resulted in four student teachers having their ratings raised considerably.

Conclusion

The students in the survey were, on the average, very positive in the rating of their student teaching experience -- so positive that they might be accused of rating inflation. However, such inflation has not been as evident in students' rating of their professors in their other college courses. Perhaps cooperating teachers who were the objects of the survey are doing some things that are right. Perhaps those who administer the student teaching program and those who teach these students in the classroom are doing so, too.

The investigators conducting this survey have attempted to fulfill the study's purpose. The research findings have been presented, analyzed and interpreted in such a manner that will permit the reader to do considerable interpreting for himself and draw his own conclusions.

APPENDIX A

TABLE VI: MEAN SCALE SCORES

TABLE VII: ANALYSES OF RESPONSES

TABLE VI

MEAN SCALE SCORES ARRANGED BY OVERALL GPA OF STUDENTS PRIOR TO STUDENT TEACHING

Mean Scale Score	Overall GPA				
	2.01-2.50	2.51-3.00	3.01-3.50	3.51-4.00	Total
4.81 - 5.00	6	14	7	3	30
4.61 - 4.80	9	7	6	1	23
4.41 - 4.60	4	5	5	2	16
4.21 - 4.40	5	7	7	2	21
4.01 - 4.20	4	5	3	2	14
3.81 - 4.00	1	1	1	1	4
3.61 - 3.80	1	1	2		4
3.41 - 3.60		2	1		3
3.21 - 3.40			1	1	2
3.01 - 3.20	1	1		1	3
2.81 - 3.00		1		1	2
2.61 - 2.80		1			1
	31	45	33	14	N=123

Table VII

ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES FOR THE ITEMS OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

ITEM NO.	STATEMENT OF ITEM	RANK* ORDER	MEAN RATING	MODAL RATING
1.	I felt comfortable working in the locale (rural, suburban, etc.) of my assignment.	2	4.72	5
2.	My relationship with the faculty was positive.	3.	4.69	5
3.	My cooperating teacher showed genuine concern for my professional development.	4.5	4.63	5
4.	I am very positive about the program/ curriculum offered in my assignment.	4.5	4.63	5
5.	My cooperating teacher and I have similar temperaments.	25	3.89	4
6.	On a personal/social level, my cooperating teacher and I related well.	9.5	4.50	5
7.	I felt challenged, but not overwhelmed by my assignment.	17	4.36	5
8.	There was a great deal of mutual trust between my cooperating teacher and me.	7	4.57	5
9.	My cooperating teacher allowed me to try things my own way, even if they failed.	9.5	4.50	5
10.	My cooperating teacher and I agree philosophically.	24	3.98	4
11.	I was successful in dealing with the ability levels of students in my classes.	23	4.20	4
12.	My cooperating teacher held a reasonable expectation of performance for me.	13	4.44	5
13.	I felt I was an integral part of the instructional team.	8	4.51	5
14.	Materials and equipment available were adequate for teaching.	21	4.30	5
15.	The cooperating teacher made sure I knew how to locate materials and services I needed for teaching.	14	4.42	5

16.	My cooperating teacher provided feedback on a regular and continuing basis.	18	4.33	5
17.	I was always aware of my teacher's expectations for me.	22	4.24	5
18.	There were usually times for my teacher and me to talk and not be interrupted.	15.5	4.41	5
19.	I was encouraged to interact with other members of the faculty and to become involved in the school's activities.	15.5	4.41	5
20.	I was able to create a climate in the classroom that was conducive to work and accomplishment.	19.5	4.34	4
21.	I felt I was asked to do worthwhile tasks, never just busy work.	12	4.46	5
22.	My cooperating teacher was obviously a good disciplinarian.	19.5	4.34	5
23.	I really liked the students I taught.	1	4.74	5
24.	I would, without reservation, recommend my cooperating teacher.	11	4.49	5
25.	All things considered, I was very satisfied with my placement for student teaching.	6	4.63	5

* Order in which an item received a positive rating compared to the other items on the instrument.

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APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

STUDENT TEACHING SURVEY

Please provide the requested information in the blanks below. We assure you it will be kept confidential.

Name_____ Soc. Sec. No._____

Male _____ Major_____

Female _____ Minor_____

Courses you taught:_____

Directions—

For each item below, indicate a high level of agreement (E) or strong disagreement (A) or the appropriate level between. Circle the letter which best indicates your answer.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. I felt comfortable working in the locale (rural, suburban, etc) of my assignment.	A	B	C	D	E
2. My relationship with the faculty was positive.	A	B	C	D	E
3. My cooperating teacher* showed genuine concern for my professional development.	A	B	C	D	E
4. I am very positive about the program/ curriculum offered in my assignment.	A	B	C	D	E
5. My cooperating teacher and I have similar temperaments.	A	B	C	D	E
6. On a personal/social level, my cooperating teacher and I related well.	A	B	C	D	E
7. I felt challenged, but not overwhelmed by my assignment.	A	B	C	D	E
8. There was a great deal of mutual trust between my cooperating teacher and me.	A	B	C	D	E
9. My cooperating teacher allowed me to try things my own way, even if they failed.	A	B	C	D	E

*By the term cooperating teacher is meant the public school teacher who supervised your student teaching.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
10. My cooperating teacher and I agree philosophically.	A	B	C	D	E
11. I was successful in dealing with the ability levels of students in my classes.	A	B	C	D	E
12. My cooperating teacher held a reasonable expectation of performance for me.	A	B	C	D	E
13. I felt I was an integral part of the instructional team.	A	B	C	D	E
14. Materials and equipment available were adequate for teaching.	A	B	C	D	E
15. The cooperating teacher made sure I knew how to locate materials and services I needed for teaching.	A	B	C	D	E
16. My cooperating teacher provided feedback on a regular and continuing basis.	A	B	C	D	E
17. I was always aware of my teacher's expectations for me.	A	B	C	D	E
18. There were usually times for my teacher and me to talk and not be interrupted.	A	B	C	D	E
19. I was encouraged to interact with other members of the faculty and to become involved in the school's activities.	A	B	C	D	E
20. I was able to create a climate in the classroom that was conducive to work and accomplishment.	A	B	C	D	E
21. I felt I was asked to do worthwhile tasks, never just busy work.	A	B	C	D	E
22. My cooperating teacher was obviously a good disciplinarian.	A	B	C	D	E
23. I really liked the students I taught.	A	B	C	D	E
24. I would, without reservation, recommend my cooperating teacher.	A	B	C	D	E
25. All things considered, I was very satisfied with my placement for student teaching.	A	B	C	D	E

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APPENDIX C

SURVEY LETTERS

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY 42101

Department of Teacher Education

May 22, 1984

(Student's Name)
(Street Address)
(City, State, Zip)

Dear (Student):

Congratulations on your completion of student teaching. We trust that you had an interesting and worthwhile educational experience. Now, we at Western would like to ask you to share a portion of that experience with us, for we believe that you can provide information that can help us improve a part of our teacher education program.

Enclosed is an instrument containing twenty-five items which we feel address many aspects of the student teacher's experience. Please take a few minutes to supply the information called for on the instrument and send it back to us in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided for your convenience.

We wish to thank you in advance for your cooperation and to assure you this information will be kept confidential. After the tabulation and analysis of the data is completed, the instruments that were returned to us will be destroyed.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Edward C. Hanes, Assoc. Prof.
Secondary Education

Dr. Archie Laman, Professor
Secondary Education

Dr. Curtis Englebright, Head
Dept. of Teacher Education

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Enclosure

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY 42101

Department of Teacher Education

July 10, 1984

(Student's Name)
(Street Address)
(City, State, Zip)

Dear (Student):

Recently, we invited you to participate in a study being conducted at Western. We consider this study to be vital to the future success of our teacher education program. Without your help, we will not be able to obtain all the necessary information for an adequate survey.

We would appreciate very much your taking just a few minutes to help us by responding to the twenty-five items in the instrument and then mailing it back to us in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you have any reservation about including your name and other data on the instrument, you may choose to omit these even though they could help our study. We want to assure you again that this information will be kept confidential and that after the tabulation and analysis of the data, the instruments returned to us will be destroyed

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Edward C. Hanes

Dr. Edward Hanes
Associate Professor of Education

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